

O 021024Z MAR 09  
FM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7860  
INFO AMCONSUL PESHAWAR  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL LAHORE IMMEDIATE  
AMCONSUL KARACHI IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE  
USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE  
CIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHINGTON DC  
SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC  
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
CDR USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L PESHAWAR 000042

E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/2/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [EAID](#) [PK](#)  
SUBJECT: NWFP: SWAT'S CEASEFIRE FRACTURING?

CLASSIFIED BY: Lynne Tracy, Principal Officer, U.S. Consulate  
Peshawar, Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (d)

#### Summary

1. (C) While Swat's principal city Mingora appears to be "calm," the fragile ceasefire is showing further cracks with an attack on a military convoy, the kidnapping of six Frontier Corps personnel north of Mingora, and militant interference with humanitarian relief. Tehrik-i Nifaz-i Shariat-i Muhammadi (TNSM) leader Sufi Mohammad announced a March 15 deadline for implementation of Shari'a law. While the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) government sees Sufi as a "simple" cleric, his apparently unscripted press conference underscores the element of unpredictability that Sufi injects as a "mediator" into ceasefire discussions with Tehrik-i Taliban (TTP). Government and hard-core militant interests are on a collision course, and local officials do not expect this ceasefire to last. We see little sign, however, of a unified government strategy for responding to violations or serious preparation for a response to a complete breakdown of the ceasefire. And, despite Foreign Minister Qureshi's insistence that the Swat deal is "a local solution to a local problem," there are reports of rising expectations that Shari'a will spread to other parts of the NWFP and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). End Summary.

#### Schools Re-Opening

2. (C) Awami National Party (ANP) deputy leader briefed Principal Officer on March 1 following a February 27-28 visit to Swat. Khattak described Mingora as "calm." Markets are open, he said, and some schools have re-opened, including private schools for girls. Government girls' schools, however, which were hard hit by militant attacks, remain closed. The government is planning to use tents to get public schools up and running. (Note: USAID is identifying funding to support this initiative.)

#### Some Relief, But Security Tenuous

3. (SBU) Humanitarian relief is reaching Mingora, but implementing partners report continuing security problems. At distribution sites, almost all internally displaced persons are carrying weapons. (Note: The NWFP government has cancelled its plans to distribute 30,000 rifles to villages after being

heavily criticized that the plan would create more problems than it would solve.) At a distribution site on February 25, militants turned up and warned relief workers not to distribute "any kind of support." That warning has been followed by FM radio broadcasts prohibiting distribution of humanitarian assistance until Shari'a is implemented.

#### Ceasefire Fracturing?

-----

¶4. (U) According to local press reports, six Frontier Corps personnel were kidnapped on March 1 a few kilometers north of Mingora. Also on March 1, a military supply convoy was reportedly attacked with two improvised explosive devices in Kabal tehsil (approximately 30 km north of Mingora), injuring two soldiers. There was no claim of responsibility for either incident. TTP spokesman Muslim Khan maintained that the government had not "informed" the TTP committee formed to oversee movements of military convoys. A government press release called the attack a "violation" of the ceasefire and urged militant leaders to control its supporters.

¶5. (C) Khattak told PO that militants are suspicious that military convoys are carrying additional forces. To counter interference with the convoys, the military, Khattak said, has persuaded TNSM's Sufi Mohammad to issue a fatwa that obstruction/attacks on military convoys is "haram" (forbidden). (Note: It is unclear whether Sufi's fatwa had been communicated to the TTP prior to the March 1 convoy attack.)

#### Sufi's Deadline

-----

¶6. (U) In a March 1 press conference, the TNSM leader set a March 15 deadline for the government to implement Shari'a law and for the release of all prisoners held by both the government and TTP. Only "qazis" (judges) who met the Shari'a criteria, "in appearance, personal conduct, and character" would be appointed. He announced that he was "dissatisfied" with the steps taken by the NWFP government to fulfill its pledge and warned that he would set up a "protest" camp if the government did not meet the deadline.

¶7. (C) Prior to Sufi's press conference, Khattak described to PO a tense exchange between TNSM and TTP. Fazlullah, he said, is telling Sufi that the government is "deceiving" him and will not honor its pledge to implement Shari'a. TTP warned the TNSM leader that "if this all falls apart, the first bullet is for you [Sufi]." Khattak had assured Sufi that the government intended to honor its pledge on Shari'a. The TNSM leader, Khattak continued, is a "simple" cleric who "doesn't even know what Shari'a really is." The government, he said, had offered to go through the proposed amendments to the Nizam-i-Adl Regulation, but Sufi had demurred, saying he "didn't understand these legal texts."

#### Comment

-----

¶8. (C) It is unclear whether Sufi Mohammad's deadline represents "dissatisfaction" with the government or was prompted by pressure from TNSM. The announcement, however, underscores the government's tendency to overestimate its control of this unpredictable cleric. Khattak was clear that ANP does not expect the ceasefire to last but given the violence that Swat and ANP supporters have endured over the past seven months, the provincial government is probably unwilling to give up on the ceasefire just yet. We see little sign, however, of a unified government strategy -- civilian-military, federal-provincial -- for responding to violations or serious preparation for a response to a complete breakdown of the ceasefire. Complicating the government's position even further, multiple Consulate contacts report that there are rising expectations that Shari'a will spread to other parts of the NWFP and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) -- another contingency for which the government appears unprepared.

